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The Society of the Cincinnati and The Corps of Engineers, United States Army

engineers

EDGAR ERSKINE HUME
Major, Medical Corps, United States Army
President of the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Virginia
and Assistant Secretary General

Reprinted and expanded from the November-December, 1933, issue of THE MILITARY ENGINEER, *Vol. XXV, No. 144, The Mills Building, Washington, D. C.*

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Mr. George W. Gale
Chicago 3

ASIDE from the interest that may be felt by all officers of the Army in the oldest military society in the country, which celebrates its hundred and fiftieth birthday this year, the Corps of Engineers is peculiarly concerned with the Society of the Cincinnati on account of the important part played by its officers in that society's institution. With the exception of one officer who died before the society was founded, every officer of the Corps of Engineers and of the Companies of Sappers and Miners (then separately organized) in the Continental Army was an original member of the Society of the Cincinnati. Moreover, six Chiefs of Engineers have held membership in the Cincinnati, including the first occupant of that office. An officer of the Corps of Engineers, under Washington's orders, designed and had manufactured the insignia of the Cincinnati, now one of the oldest military decorations in the world. Kosciuszko, one of the bright lights of the Corps, was ever an enthusiastic member of the Cincinnati.

As early as 1776, Major General Henry Knox, Washington's Chief of Artillery, in a conversation with Adams, expressed "a wish for some ribbon to wear in his hat or in his button-hole, to be transmitted to his descendants as a badge and proof that he had fought in defense of their liberties." On May 10, 1783, proposals, in Knox's handwriting, for the creation of "a society to be formed by the American officers and to be called the Cincinnati," were presented to the several regiments at the "Cantonment of the American army on Hudson's river." Each regiment appointed a representative who, with the general officers of the army, met to consider them. This gathering was in the "Temple" or place of meeting and worship of the soldiers. On the 13th, the committee which had been appointed to revise the proposals, met in the Verplanck Mansion, General Steuben's headquarters at Fishkill, and accepted the Institution, as it was called.

The name of the society was taken from that of the illustrious Roman general, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus, who at the call of country left his farm and led the armies of Rome to victory, and when that victory had been achieved, returned again to his plough, refusing the honors proffered him by a

grateful Senate. The Institution of the Cincinnati begins with these words:

It having pleased the Supreme Governor of the Universe, in the disposition of human affairs, to cause the separation of the colonies of North America from domination of Great Britain, and, after a bloody conflict of eight years, to establish them free, independent, and sovereign states, connected, by alliances founded on reciprocal advantage, with some of the greatest princes and powers of the earth;

To perpetuate, therefore, as well the remembrance of this vast event, as the mutual friendships which have been formed under the pressure of common danger, and, in many instances, cemented by the blood of the parties, the officers of the American army do, hereby, in the most solemn manner, associate, constitute, and combine themselves into one society of friends, to endure as long as they shall endure, or any of their eldest male posterity, and, in failure thereof, the collateral branches who may be judged worthy of becoming its supporters and members.

Organization and Membership

At the first meeting General Washington was unanimously chosen President General. The Commander in Chief, whose conduct had so strikingly resembled that of Cincinnatus of old, accepted the honor and held the office to the end of his life. At his death in 1799, Major General Alexander Hamilton was elected President General and held office until his tragic death, when he was succeeded by Major General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of South Carolina, whose words, "millions for defense but not one cent for tribute," are known to every school boy. On his death Major General Thomas Pinckney was elected to the office in 1825, being succeeded by Major General Aaron Ogden of New Jersey in 1829. In 1839 Major General Morgan Lewis, and in 1844 Major William Popham, both of New York, were elected President General. Brigadier General Henry Alexander Scammell Dearborn of Massachusetts was elected in 1848; Hamilton Fish of New York in 1854; William Wayne of Pennsylvania in 1896; Winslow Warren of Massachusetts in 1902; and John Collins Daves of North Carolina in 1932. Each President General has held office for life and in a century and a half there have been but twelve men elected to that high office. Even more remark-

able is that in this period there have been only eight Secretaries General, the first of whom was Major General Knox, who conceived the idea of the Society.

Membership was open to officers of the Continental Army who had served as such for three years or to the end of the war. Later, officers of the Navy were likewise admitted. The first meeting voted to recognize as members the French Navy and Army officers who had served in America, giving them the right to organize a branch of the Society in France. All officers were required, upon signing its rolls, to contribute one month's pay to maintain the society and aid members in need. Upon the death of a member his membership passes to his eldest son, and so on, following the law of primogeniture, the Society has come down to us. In 1854 it was resolved to admit as hereditary members the eldest male representatives of such Continental officers as were eligible to original membership but who did not join the society. Officers who died in service were eligible to representation under the Institution.

At the first meeting, the design for the Society's insignia was approved and, on June 19, the meeting charged Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant with the duty of having them made in Paris. The badge consists of a bald eagle, "a bird peculiar to the American continent." Grasped in the eagle's talons are golden olive branches and above its head an olive wreath by which it is suspended from a ribbon of sky blue and white, "descriptive of the union of France with America." On the breast of the eagle is a medallion with "the figure of Cincinnatus being presented with a sword by three Senators, and in the background his wife standing at the door of their cottage, near it a plough and other instruments of husbandry." Round the whole the legend: *Omnia Reliquit Servare Republicam* (He left all to serve the Republic). On the reverse "a sun rising; a city with open gates, and vessels entering the port; Fame crowning Cincinnatus with a wreath inscribed *Virtutis Præmium*, and below, hands joined, supporting a heart with the motto: *Esto Perpetua*, and round the whole *Societas Cincinnatorum Instituta* A. D., 1783." Washington ordered not only one of the eagles for himself but six others which he presented to his principal military aides.

On February 24, 1784, the officers of the French Navy who had been admitted to the Order of the Cincinnati, as it was always known in France, presented General Washington, through His Excellency the Count d'Estaing, the ranking naval officer, with the eagle of the Cincinnati richly set in diamonds.

Washington wore this eagle at official gatherings of the Cincinnati and after his death it was transmitted by his heirs to his successor General Hamilton, and since then it has been worn by each President General. It is probable that this eagle is the most valuable relic of Washington in existence.

The diplomas of membership, also designed by L'Enfant, drawn by the famous French master, Auguste L. Belle, and executed by J. J. Le Veau, were in every instance signed by Washington as President General and by Knox as Secretary General. Some of these certificates, signed by Washington at Mount Vernon, are among the last documents to which he affixed his signature. One of the interesting features of the Triennial Meeting of the Cincinnati held in Boston in June, 1929, the first for over a hundred years at which French delegates were present, was the delivery to the President of the French Society, the Duke de Broglie, descendant and representative of the Prince de Broglie of Yorktown fame, of 33 diplomas of the Cincinnati, bearing Washington's autograph, and made out for original members of the French Society. The diplomas had lain among the Cincinnati's papers, awaiting delivery, all those years. The Society for safe keeping has now placed its extensive archives in the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress.

The Cincinnati in France

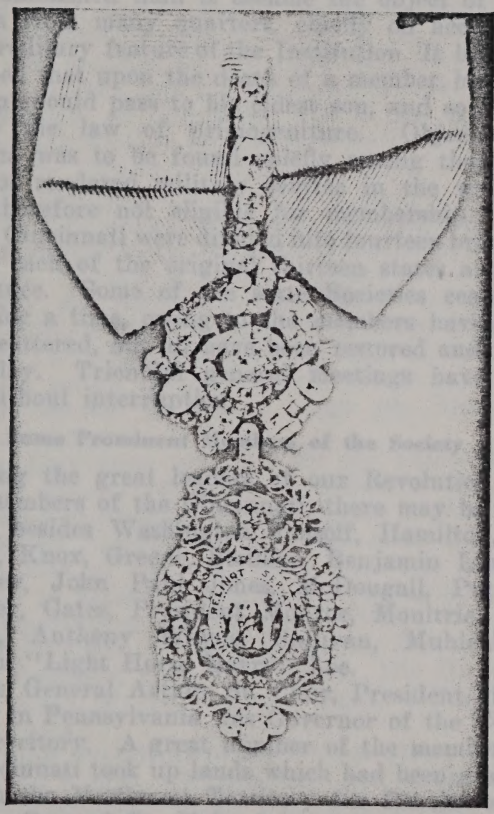
On December 18, 1783, His Most Christian Majesty, Louis XVI of France, promulgated a decree authorizing all qualified French officers to accept membership in the Cincinnati under the Institution. The sovereign consented to be the Patron of the Order in France and all claims were to be finally passed by him in the same manner as for the Royal and Military Order of Saint-Louis. Notification of this action was sent to the Count de Rochambeau by the Marquis de Ségur, in a letter dated that same day, in which he added:

His most Christian Majesty wishes you, on his behalf, to assure His Excellency, General Washington, that he will always regard with extreme satisfaction everything which may tend to maintain and strengthen the ties formed between France and the United States. The successes which have resulted from this union and the glory which has been the fruit of it have shown its advantages.

The *Gazette de France* of December 23, 1783, officially announced the establishment of the Order and contained a full account of the Institution. On April 15, 1784, the first issue of the *Journal Militaire* gave an account of the Order of the Cincinnati with a list of the French officers admitted to membership with direct approval of the king.

The Cincinnati's records contain copies of many of Washington's letters to the Society in France respecting the claims of French officers to membership.

The French Revolution caused the dispersion of the members of the Cincinnati in France, though as late as February, 1792, after all titles of nobility and orders had been suppressed, so great was the desire for membership that the Minister of War presented a list of applicants to the king, which was personally endorsed by him as "approved" on February 3, 1792, and was his last official act in connection with the Order of the Cincinnati. There came a time, indeed, when the possession of the Cincinnati eagle became a great danger and might consign the bearer to the guillotine or death at the hands of the fierce rabble. In September, 1792, a number of political prisoners, including the venerable Duc de Brissac and other aristocrats, were ordered to be transported, under escort, from Orléans to Paris. Seven wagons, each containing eight prisoners loaded with chains, set out on the fatal journey, headed by Fourier, a renegade American. Arrived at the gates of Versailles, they were attacked by a mob of assassins that lay in waiting, and butchered in cold blood. "From the neck of Fourier's horse," says Lamartine, in his History of the Girondins, "dangled a collar composed of crosses of Saint-Louis, eagles of Cincinnatus, and other military decorations snatched from the breasts of the victims." A great many of the French members perished on the guillotine during the Reign of Terror, and though numerous individual hereditary members were admitted



Diamond Eagle of the Society

Presented to General Washington by officers of the French Navy and worn by every President General since Washington. The inscription on the reverse is: *D d in the name of the french saillors to His Excellency the General Washington.* A part of the first word is chipped away but may have been *"Donated."*

from time to time, the Order of the Cincinnati in France was not officially revived until 1925. It has today a membership of more than 175.

Opposition to the Cincinnati was not confined to Revolutionary France. No sooner had the society been established than it became the object of fierce attacks from many quarters, chiefly on account of the hereditary feature of the Institution. It had been provided that upon the death of a member, his membership should pass to his eldest son, and so on following the law of primogeniture. Objection in America was to be found chiefly among those who had not rendered military service in the war and were therefore not eligible for membership.

The Cincinnati were divided into fourteen branches, one in each of the original thirteen states and one in France. Some of the state Societies ceased to exist, for a time, owing to the members having become scattered, but all have been restored and flourish today. Triennial general meetings have been held without interruption.

Some Prominent Members of the Society

Among the great leaders of our Revolution who were members of the Cincinnati, there may be mentioned, besides Washington himself, Hamilton, Lafayette, Knox, Greene, Steuben, Benjamin Lincoln, Pinckney, John Paul Jones, McDougall, Putnam, Schuyler, Gates, President Monroe, Moultrie, Kosciuszko, Anthony Wayne, Sullivan, Muhlenberg, Weedon, "Light Horse Harry" Lee.

Major General Arthur St. Clair, President of the Society in Pennsylvania was Governor of the Northwest Territory. A great number of the members of the Cincinnati took up lands which had been granted them in the Northwest Territory for Revolutionary service. General St. Clair changed the name of the chief town, Losantiville, to Cincinnati, in honor of the Society. This is the origin of the name of the city of Cincinnati, Ohio.

The French members included, as Baron de Contenson says, "the very elite of the French nobility." Among them were: Marshal of France the Count de Rochambeau, Commander of the French Auxiliary Army in America; Admiral the Count de Grasse, Naval Commander without whom there could have

been no victory at Yorktown; the Count d'Estaing, Commander of the French Coöperating Army in America, first President of the French Cincinnati, who perished on the guillotine; General the Count d'Aboville, commandant of artillery in the French Expeditionary Force; Vice-Admiral the Count de Bougainville, the celebrated navigator; Prince Victor de Broglie, Deputy of Alsace to the States General, who perished on the guillotine; Berthier, Napoleon's general and the future Prince de Wagram; the Marquis de Chastellux, one of the most celebrated philosophers of the eighteenth century; the Count de Custine, General in Chief during the French Revolution, who perished on the guillotine; the Count de Fersen of Sweden who made such heroic efforts to save Marie Antoinette; the Duke de Montmorency, Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Restoration; the Marquis de Mac-Mahon; the great La Motte-Piquet; the Viscount de Noailles, brother-in-law of Lafayette; the Bailli de Suffren, one of the greatest sailors of the century; the Count de Viomenil, Marshal of France under the Restoration; and many more.

The Institution provided for the admission of a limited number of honorary members, men whose services and ideals have been similar to those of the Cincinnati. Under this provision some of the most noted men of this and other countries have been elected to honorary membership, including: Franklin, Gouverneur Morris, Paca, Perry, Bainbridge, Winfield Scott, Webster, Farragut, Dewey, Jusserand, President Loubet of France, His Majesty Albert, King of the Belgians, Foch, Joffre, Pétain, and others.

Fifteen Presidents of the United States have been members. Two, Washington and Monroe, were original members; Pierce was an hereditary member, and the following have been honorary members: Jackson, Taylor, Buchanan, Grant, Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison, McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson, Harding, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Had not the Virginia Society of the Cincinnati been dormant, General Zachary Taylor would probably have been an hereditary instead of an honorary member, as he was the son of Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Taylor, of the Second Virginia Regiment,

Continental Line, who was an original member.

The Corps of Engineers and the Society

The following six Chiefs of Engineers have been members of the Society: Brigadier General Rufus Putnam of Massachusetts, 1776; Major General Louis Le Bègue de Presle Duportail, of France, 1777; Lieutenant Colonel Etienne-Nicolas-Marie Béchet de Rochefontaine, 1795; Brigadier General Henry Burbeck of Massachusetts, 1814; Brigadier General Thomas Lincoln Casey, of New York, 1888; Major General Lytle Brown, of Tennessee, 1929.

Probably the most interesting connection between the Corps of Engineers and the Society of the Cincinnati is that of the three companies of Sappers and Miners, formed by Resolve of Congress of May 27, 1778, and of the Corps of Engineers, formed by Resolve of Congress of March 11, 1779, *every* officer was a member of the Cincinnati, with the exception of Colonel de la Radière, who died four years before the Cincinnati was instituted. This is truly a remarkable record. The list of these officers is: Chief Engineer (Brigadier General) Antoine Jean Louis Le Bègue Duportail; Colonels, Thaddeus Kosciuszko, Louis Baileul de la Radière (died 1779), Jean-Baptiste-Joseph de Laumoy, and Jeduthun Baldwin; Lieutenant Colonel Louis-Antoine-Jean-Baptiste de Cambray-Digny; Majors, Jean-Baptiste-Obrey de Gouvion, Jean-Louis-Ambroise de Genton de Villefranche, and Ferdinand-Joseph-Sebastian de Brahm; Captains, Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, Daniel Niven, James Bebee, and Murray; Captain Lieutenants, James Gilliland, David Bushnell, and Moses Cleaveland; and Lieutenant John Welch.

It is interesting also to recall that nineteen members of the Society of the Cincinnati have held the office of General in Chief or Chief of Staff of the Army. They were: General George Washington, 1775; Major General Henry Knox, 1783; Captain John Doughty, 1784; Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Harmar, 1784; Major General Arthur St. Clair, 1791; Major General Anthony Wayne, 1792; Lieutenant General George Washington, 1798; Major General Alexander Hamilton, 1799; Major General Henry Dearborn, 1812; Major General Jacob Brown, 1815; Major General Winfield Scott, 1841; General

Ulysses Simpson Grant, 1864; General William Tecumseh Sherman, 1869; Lieutenant General Nelson Appleton Miles, 1895; Lieutenant General Adna Romanza Chaffee, 1904; Major General Leonard Wood, 1910; Major General Hugh Lenox Scott, 1914; General Peyton Conway March, 1918; General of the Armies John Joseph Pershing, 1921.

The age of the Order of the Cincinnati in the changing world in which we live, is realized when we compare it with the orders of other lands. For example, of the seventy-five countries engaged in the World War, counting twenty-seven more or less independent German states, and the twelve countries which grew out of that war, none has any military order, cross or other decoration as old as the Eagle of the Cincinnati except Great Britain, Italy, and Portugal. Moreover, the orders of these three countries, namely the Orders of the Garter, Thistle, St. Patrick, and the Bath of Great Britain, the Orders of the Tower and Sword, Christ, and Avis of Portugal, and the Order of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus of Italy, while founded long before the Cincinnati, have all undergone revision or other considerable change since the institution of the Cincinnati. So despite the youth of the American Republic, its oldest military decoration, unaltered for one hundred and fifty years, is the senior order in point of age without change, in the world. It will of course be remembered that all of the orders of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia, some of which were older than the Cincinnati, have been abolished. France has no order older than the Legion of Honor, founded by Napoleon in 1802.

Washington at all times took the greatest interest in the activities of the Society of the Cincinnati and guided them with his council. In a letter to Knox of October 16, 1783, he speaks of a gift to the Society of five hundred dollars. His personal gift to Liberty Hall Academy in Rockbridge County, Virginia, so inspired the Virginia branch of the Order that they voted in 1807 to present their entire fund, consisting of some $25,000, derived from the contribution of a month's pay by each member, to this institution, which by that time had become known as Washington College—now Washington and Lee University.

When the news of Washington's death was received by the state societies, the members voted to wear mourning. For example, at a special meeting of the Massachusetts Society on January 15, 1800, it was ordered "that the members of the Society continue to wear a black crape cockade in the hat till the 5th of July next, as a badge of mourning for their deceased President-general, George Washington." The first act of the adjourned General Meeting on May 5, 1800, was the adoption of a "testimonial of respect" to the memory of General Washington, and a "mournful tribute of their sorrow, at that awful dispensation of Providence, which has recently removed from their councils, their much revered and lamented President-general."

On the day of the Coronation of King George the Fifth and Queen Mary, the General Society of the Cincinnati at the Triennial Meeting at Newport, cabled through Ambassador Reid the following congratulations to Their Majesties:

"The General Society of the Cincinnati, consisting of descendants of the Army of the Revolution and having as their first president the illustrious Washington, in general convention assembled at Newport, Rhode Island, this twenty-seventh day of June, 1911, tenders, through the American Ambassador at the Court of St. James's, to Their Majesties, King George the Fifth and Queen Mary, their sincere congratulations upon their accession to the throne of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and the Empire of India, and join in the universal hope that their reign may be long and happy, and bring the blessings of peace and prosperity to the great nation over which they are called to rule, and tend still further to strengthen the bond of the two great English-speaking peoples of the world."

The Society received the following reply, delivered to the American Ambassador:

"The Queen and I have received with great pleasure the very kind message forwarded by Your Excellency from the General Society of the Cincinnati. Will you be so good as to convey to its members our sincere thanks for their congratulations upon our coronation and good wishes for our prosperity and that of my people. It is especially gratifying to know that these are the sentiments of a body com-

posed of the descendants of officers of the American Army of the Revolution, and I cordially reciprocate their hope for the still further strengthening of the tie of friendship between the two great English-speaking peoples of the world. GEORGE R. I."

Last year, on the occasion of the celebration of the sesqui-centennial of the victory of Yorktown, the Society of the Cincinnati took an appropriate part. On the day following the ceremonies at Yorktown, the official guests of the nation were welcomed in Richmond. In the Rotunda of the Virginia Capitol, replica of the *Maison Carrée* of Nimes, Governor Pollard received them. Marshal Pétain replied for the delegation of France, his words being translated by General the Count de Chambrun, great-grandson of Lafayette, and presented the Governor with a gold medal struck by the French government in commemoration of the Yorktown capitulation, another being presented to General Pershing. The guests then entered the adjoining Hall of Delegates, that historic chamber which had witnessed the trial and acquittal of Aaron Burr, and in which in 1861 the command of the Southern forces was accepted by the great Robert Edward Lee, most distinguished of all American military engineers, and son of "Light Horse Harry" Lee, an original member of the Cincinnati. Here, in the presence of a large company, including General Pershing, Governor Pollard, and designated representatives of France and America, the President of the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Virginia presented Marshal Pétain and M. Claudel, the French Ambassador, with honorary memberships in the Cincinnati. To Marshal Pétain he said, in part, that "the Eagle has been worn by Kings, Presidents of France and of the United States, Marshals of France and distinguished men of both nations in yet other walks of life; but I am firmly convinced, as are all the members of the Order, that nowhere could it find a more fitting resting place than where I now place it, on the breast of Marshal Pétain, Commander-in-Chief of the French Army in the Great War, who, like Washington, commanded Frenchmen and Americans in a war for freedom."

The Virginia Society also struck a medal commemorating the Yorktown sesqui-centennial celebra-

tion, and presented copies, among others, to the distinguished hereditary members of the Society in France, who had come to the celebration of the victory which their ancestors had helped to achieve. They included the Marquis de Grasse, descendant of the Count de Grasse, the Naval commander; the Marquis de Rochambeau, descendant of the Count de Rochambeau, who commanded France's land forces; the Marquis and the Count de Chambrun, descendants of Lafayette; the Duke de Noailles, descendant of the representative of the Auxiliary Army to arrange the terms of the surrender of the Earl of Cornwallis; the Duke de Broglie, President of the French Cincinnati and descendant of the Prince de Broglie; General the Count d'Ollone, Vice-President of the French Cincinnati; and others. Major the Baron von Steuben of the German Army, representative of the family of General de Steuben, the drillmaster of the Continental Army, and President of the New York Society of the Cincinnati, was also present. The medal was likewise presented to the officers of the two French battleships, the *Duquesne* and the *Suffren* (both named for members of the Cincinnati), the Presidents of the United States, France and Poland, the Secretaries of War and Navy, and a few others.

Nor was this occasion forgotten by the Cincinnati of France. On July Fourth of the same year, two plaques were unveiled at the former residence of Rochambeau, 40 *rue de Cherchemidi*, in Paris. The tablet to the left of the door is inscribed:

Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimur
Comte de Rochambeau
Maréchal de France, 1725-1807
habitait cet hôtel quant il reçu le
commandement de l'armée envoyé par
le Roi Louis XVI en Amérique, 1780
pour aider à conquérir leur indépendance

The tablet on the right side of the door reads:

La section française de la
Société des Cincinnati a été
fondée dans cet hôtel, 7-16 janvier 1784
en souvenir de la guerre de
l'Indépendance Américaine.

One of the most famous members of the Cincinnati, whose signature appears on its earliest roll,

was the distinguished Polish military engineer, Tadeusz Andrzej Bonawentura Kosciuszko, a man as dear to Americans as to Poles.

Born of a noble family in 1746, he graduated at the age of eighteen at the cadet college of Warsaw, thereafter studying engineering in Paris. Fired by enthusiasm for the American cause, he resigned his commission in the Polish Army and coming to America was commissioned Colonel-Engineer on October 18, 1776, and served to the close of the war. In 1783 he was promoted Brigadier General upon Washington's recommendation "for long, faithful and honorable services in the American Army."

Not long after the Revolution he returned to Poland and took a leading part in Poland's wars for independence, greatly distinguishing himself. Finally in the face of overwhelming odds, he fell seriously wounded at Maciejowice on October 10, 1794, and here it was, as everybody knows from Campbell's poem, that "Freedom shrieked as Kosciuszko fell."

Through the magnanimity of the Tsar Paul, Kosciuszko was set at liberty, and visited England before his wound had healed, and was received with enthusiasm. In 1796 he paid his second visit to America, where he spent some two years, visiting Washington, Jefferson (whom he appointed executor of his will), and other friends. He returned to France at the request of Napoleon, but when his plea for a definite promise of the restoration of Poland was refused, he would not draw his sword. He died in Switzerland in 1817, unmarried.

The military engineer who is second only to Kosciuszko in popular esteem in America, is Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant, born in Paris on August 2, 1754, the son of Pierre L'Enfant, "Painter in ordinary to the King in his Manufacture of the Gobelins." Young L'Enfant grew up amid artistic surroundings and received instruction as an architect and engineer. In 1777, aged twenty-three, holding a commission as Lieutenant of French colonial troops, he sailed for America in one of the ships of Beaumarchais's mythical firm of "Hortalez & Co.," a firm whose cargoes of soldiers and munitions for the Americans, were as much a product of the dramatist's brain as *Figaro* himself. L'Enfant was commissioned Lieutenant of Engineers, and the fol-

lowing year was promoted Captain, serving at first at his own expense. He was wounded at the siege of Savannah, but managed to get to Charleston where he was captured on the fall of the city, in 1780. Rochambeau negotiated his exchange in 1782 for a Hessian officer. Washington's commendation resulted in his promotion to Major in 1783.

He signed the Parchment Roll as one of the earliest members of the Society of the Cincinnati, and at the first meeting submitted his drawing of a design for the badge of the newly instituted Order. His design was duly approved and he was sent to France to have the eagles made. From Paris he wrote Washington glowing accounts of the way the idea of the Cincinnati had been welcomed in France, and told him of the first meetings held, one at the house of Rochambeau, *Rue de Cherchemidi,* for officers in the French service, and another at the house of Lafayette, *Rue de Bourbon,* for French officers who held their commissions from Congress, the two groups deciding thereupon to unite under Admiral d'Estaing as President. When the eagles were ready, L'Enfant brought them back to America for distribution to the members. He was honorably retired from the service on January 1, 1784, and made his home in Philadelphia. On April 3, 1784, he was appointed Temporary Engineer for duty at Fort Mifflin, in constructing the defenses. He was appointed by President Madison, in July, 1812, Professor of Civil and Military Engineering at the United States Military Academy, but declined. He died in Prince George's County, Maryland, on June 14, 1825, having become an American citizen. He is best known for his plans for the city of Washington, and was the architect for several of the public buildings of the Capital. He was reinterred at Arlington National Cemetery in 1909 with appropriate ceremonies in which officials of the American and French governments, and L'Enfant's beloved Society of the Cincinnati united.

Duportail and His Companions

The father of the Corps of Engineers, Louis Le Bègue de Presle Duportail, was born in 1743 in Pithiviers en Gâtinois, a small town near Orléans, and educated at the military school of Mézières,

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where he qualified as an Engineer officer at the age of eighteen. During the summer of 1776 he was called to prepare a new set of rules to be adopted by the Engineers. Because of this work and because of the alacrity with which he responded to the suggestion of the Minister that he go to America, DuPortail was commissioned a Lieutenant Colonel in the Corps of Royal Engineers.

Duportail was allowed to choose three companions, and the four left Nantes secretly early in March, 1777, and after having reshipped at St. Domingo and passing via New Berne, North Carolina, reached Philadelphia. His companions were three energetic and skillful military engineers, the Chevalier Jean-Baptiste-Joseph de Laumoy, Monsieur Louis Baileul de la Radière, and the Chevalier Jean-Baptiste de Gouvion.

Duportail was commissioned Brigadier General on November 17, 1777, and joined Washington on the eve of the battle of Germantown. His best known services were in planning and erecting the defenses which kept the army safe during its darkest moment, the terrible winter of 1778 at Valley Forge. In 1781, after five years of service, Duportail received leave to visit France, and Washington himself wrote a warm letter of commendation of his services.

Returning to America in 1782, he organized the Corps of Engineers of the American Army. When the Society of the Cincinnati was instituted on May 13, 1783, Duportail was among the first to sign what in the Society is known as the Parchment Roll, the first list of members. He returned to France where the king bestowed on him the coveted Cross of Saint-Louis, and an annuity of twenty-four hundred *livres*. In 1788 he was made *Maréchal de Camp*, a grade corresponding to Brigadier General, and was ordered to Naples where he organized the royal troops. In 1790 he was made Minister of War. He had no better fortune than others of the old régime, and in the Revolution was "condemned by accusation," but escaped execution by hiding in Paris until he could flee to America.

Another French émigré, the Count de Pontgibaud, who had been a volunteer in the Revolution and aide-de-camp to Lafayette, and who like Lafayette was a member of the Cincinnati, visited Philadelphia

in 1796 and there saw many old friends, among them Duportail. He wrote that the former Chief of Engineers had "learned nothing and forgotten nothing" by his experiences.

Duportail remained in America until 1802, though his name at the instance of Lieutenant General Mathieu Damas, a fellow member of the Cincinnati, had been removed from the list of *émigrés.* It was the call of Napoleon which stirred him to action, but he died on the passage over, and was buried at sea.

Of Duportail's three companions who accompanied him to America, Colonel de la Radière served until his death in 1779. Duportail wrote to the French Minister from Morristown on December 12, 1779, that he had been buried with military honors and that his good friend Engineer Colonel Jeduthan Baldwin (later to become a member of the Cincinnati) had conducted *la pompe funèbre.* Colonel de Laumoy was with the main Continental Army at Valley Forge. His service after 1779 was principally in the Department of the South under Major General Benjamin Lincoln (a member of the Cincinnati). He was captured on the capitulation of Charleston, 1780, and was not exchanged until 1781. Like Duportail he signed the original Parchment Roll as a member of the Society of the Cincinnati. On his return to France he was promoted by the King and created a Knight of the Royal and Military Order of Saint-Louis. He subsequently served under Lafayette and with him emigrated from Sedan in 1792. He was arrested at Rochefort and confined in Antwerp but was later released and returned to America, making his home in Philadelphia. He returned to France in 1801 and was honorably retired from the military service in 1811. The fourth member of the group was Lieutenant Colonel de Gouvion. In 1780 he was appointed to command the Continental Corps of Sappers and Miners, which in 1781 was made a separate Corps, and in which year de Gouvion received the brevet of Colonel. Like his companions he signed the Parchment Roll as an original member of the Order of the Cincinnati, in May, 1783, and in October was honorably retired. Meanwhile he had been promoted in the French service and became, in 1789, aide-de-

camp to Lafayette when the latter became Commandant General of the National Guards. He was promoted *Maréchal de Camp* (Brigadier General) in 1791 and second in command of the National Guards. He was Deputy to the National Assembly in the same year. He again served under Lafayette who had become General-in-Chief of the Army of Flanders and was killed by a cannon shot from the enemy in the affair of Grisuelle on June 11, 1792.

Other French Engineer Members

Duportail's successor as Chief of Engineers was Etienne-Nicolas-Marie-Béchet de Rochefontaine. Formerly an *Aspirant,* ranking as *Lieutenant en Second,* in the Corps of Royal Engineers of France, he came to America by permission of the king in 1778. He was commissioned Captain of Engineers on his arrival, being promoted Major by brevet three years later. His name appears on the earliest roll of members of the Society of the Cincinnati, in May, 1783. In the following December he was honorably discharged and returned to France. He had meanwhile been appointed Captain by Louis XVI for his services in America, and, in 1784, assigned as assistant in the *Corps de l'Etat-Major.* He was promoted in the French Army and, in 1791, he served in St. Domingo. At the beginning of the French Revolution he emigrated to America and was appointed Temporary Engineer, United States Army, for duty on the New England fortifications, 1794. On February 26, 1795, he was appointed Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of Artillerists and Engineers. He was honorably discharged in 1798 and resided in New York until his death in 1814.

Among other French military engineers in American service who became members of the Society of the Cincinnati was the Chevalier Louis-Antoine-Jean-Baptiste de Cambray-Digny, who was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of Engineers in the Continental Army in 1778, served in the Southern Army; was captured at the fall of Charleston, 1780; exchanged in 1782, promoted Colonel by brevet, 1783, honorably discharged at the end of the war, became a member of the Society of the Cincinnati in France where the king commissioned him in the provisional forces.

The Chevalier Jean-Louis-Ambroise de Genton de Villefranche had served in the *Corps Royal des Ingénieurs Géographes* in 1770 and was a *Sous-Lieutenant* in the *Régiment du Roi,* 1776. He came to America with du Coudray in 1777 and was commissioned Captain by the Continental Congress. He was promoted Major, 1778, and Lieutenant Colonel in 1783. He signed the Parchment Roll as an original member of the Cincinnati. He was the author of a map of West Point and its dependencies. On his return to France the King restored him to his former regiment and gave him a pension of five hundred *livres* a year. He died in 1784.

François-Louis-Teisseidre, Marquis de Fleury, served in Corsica as a sublieutenant of infantry, 1768-1770. He came to America with du Coudray, and was commissioned Captain of Engineers, 1777, serving without pay. In that year Congress presented him with a horse to replace the one killed under him at the battle of Brandywine. He had this horse killed under him at Germantown and was wounded. He had many important assignments such as Brigade Major under Count Pulaski, assistant to Baron Steuben as Inspector-General, under General Sullivan at Newport, and under General Anthony Wayne at Stony Point. He was voted a silver medal by Congress in 1779. At the end of the war he returned to France and was one of the original members of the French Society of the Cincinnati. He was made a Knight of the Royal and Military Order of Saint-Louis and given a pension of 400 *livres* by Louis XVI. He was promoted Colonel of the Regiment of Pondichery (East Indies), 1784. Returning to France in 1790 he was promoted *Maréchal de Camp* (Brigadier General) and served under Marshal the Count de Rochambeau at Valenciennes in the war against Austria. He was disabled during the retreat from Mons and honorably retired, 1792.

One of the first French engineers to arrive in America was Antoine-Felix Wuibert de Mézières, was appointed Engineer, June 26, 1776, promoted Lieutenant Colonel in August of the same year. He was chief engineer of the defenses of Fort Washington until its capture by the enemy. He was sent to England as a prisoner of war, but was

exchanged in 1778, and sent to France. He volunteered to accompany Commodore John Paul Jones in the *Bonhomme Richard,* and was present in the combat with *H. M. S. Serapis,* 1779. He embarked for America in a prize to the Continental frigate *Alliance,* but it was captured by *H. M. S. Grey House* and he was sent a prisoner to Jamaica, being exchanged in 1780. On his way to the United States in a merchant ship he was again captured and confined for a time in the prison ship *Jersey,* but was exchanged for the third time in 1781 and served as Chief Engineer of the Western Army to the close of the war, being promoted Colonel by brevet in September 1783. He was an original member of the Society of the Cincinnati in Pennsylvania.

The engineer officer under Major General Sullivan in the expedition against the Six Nations was Major Jean-Bernard de Murnan, who had been commissioned in 1778. He commanded the Sappers and Miners at the siege of Yorktown and later served at West Point. He signed the Parchment Roll as an original member of the Cincinnati.

One of the officers who came to America with Lafayette was Major Michel Duchesnoy, formerly an officer of the Aquitaine Regiment of Infantry. He was commissioned Captain of Engineers by Congress in 1778 and served through the war as aide-de-camp to Lafayette. He returned with Lafayette to France in 1782 and was in the staff of the army under d'Estaing at Cadiz, destined for operations in the West Indies, until peace. He was an original member of the Society of the Cincinnati in France.

There were about two thousand original members of the Cincinnati, there being today about thirteen hundred. The Society has been the model for a large number of what are known as "patriotic societies." It has never taken any part in political matters, and they, like religious discussions, are barred from all its meetings. The members accept the solemn duty imposed upon them by the honorable traditions of the Cincinnati, chief among which is of course an attempt to follow in the footsteps of their first President General, George Washington.

Be it known that Ferdinand Joseph Sebastian de Brahm Esquire
is a Member of the Society of the Cincinnati, instituted by the Officers of the American Army, at the Period of its Dissolution, as well to commemorate the great Event which gave Independence to North-America, as for the laudable Purpose of inculcating the Duty of laying down in Peace Arms assumed for public Defence, and of uniting in Acts of brotherly Affection, and Bonds of perpetual Friendship the Members constituting the same.
IN TESTIMONY whereof We the President of the said Society, have hereunto set my Hand at Mount-Vernon in the State of Virginia, this Thirty-first Day of October in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and eighty five, and in the tenth Year of the Independence of the United States.
By order.
Secretary
President

The Diploma of One of the Early Engineer Members

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